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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CREATES 133 JUDGESHIIPS TO RESUME AND
ACCELERATE IDENTIFICATION/NATIONALITY PROCESS

¶1. (U) President Gbagbo has signed a decree creating 133 judgeships throughout Cote d'Ivoire, in areas controlled by both the government and the New Forces. The decree was signed on October 5 but only published on October 17, on the eve of the AU Peace and Security Council meeting on Cote d'Ivoire in Addis Ababa. All 133 judges will have the authority to issue certificates of nationality for Ivoirians eligible for them. The identification/nationality process has been paralyzed since July of this year over disagreements as to when the nationality certificates could be issued and by whom. President Gbagbo had argued that the itinerant identification courts (audiences foraines) could issue registration for undocumented residents, both Ivoirians and foreigners, but that the nationality certificates for Ivoirian citizens had to be issued separately. Suspended identification, in turn, has halted the disarmament process.

¶2. (SBU) The new decree, drafted by the Justice Minister and signed by President Gbagbo, may get things moving again. The new judges will participate in the audience foraines and, separately and subsequently, issue certificates of nationality to those residents found to be Ivoirian. According to the official in the Ivoirian Justice Ministry in charge of the audiences foraines, with 133 judges able to issue certificates of nationality, the process of issuing certificates to all those who need one should be completed in about three months. (Comment: This is probably overly optimistic. End Comment.) The new decree responds to a call by Prime Minister Banny to appoint more judges to speed up the nationality process. It is probably no coincidence that the decree was published just before the start of the AU summit as it allowed Gbagbo to point to another measure that he had implemented to restart the peace process. Nevertheless, regardless of the motivation for the action, the creation of the new judgeships is a positive development. Even the pro-RDR paper, Le Patriote, has come out in favor of the announcement. The next step will be to identify the individuals who can actually step in and fill the newly created positions.
Valle